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UNCLAS ABUJA 001467

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM TIDBITS

SHARI'A

1. (U) The Amina Lawal case is to appear again before the Katsina State Shari'a Court of Appeal on Wednesday August 27. Hearings have been delayed three times before for various reasons. Meanwhile, the Jigawa State Shari'a Court of Appeal dismissed charges of rape (with a penalty of death by stoning) against one Sarimu Mohamed Barand on the grounds he was mentally ill. Barand has been remanded to a psychiatric hospital, but the basis for the mental illness claim has not been released.

STATE SUPPORT FOR PILGRIMAGES

2. (U) Vice President Atiku told the Muslim-Christian Mutual Relations group August 25 that the GON is considering reducing its role in the sponsoring of religious pilgrimages to Mecca and Jerusalem to "regulating the environment and providing consular and health support services." There were no indications of how firm this consideration is and whether it would be applied during this year's hajj.

3. (U) Meanwhile, Governor Shekarau of majority-Muslim Kano State has selected a Muslim as the coordinator of the Christian Pilgrim Board, the body responsible for coordinating state-funded Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem. While numerous officials of the Christian Association of Nigeria immediately protested, some accepted the decision due to allegations of corruption surrounding previous Christian coordinators.
ROBERTS